



Virtual Fisheries Forum 15/03/2022 (Stocking Regulations & Best Practice).

Q&A session

Q. Is there a limit on the number of grass carp kept in an enclosed water alongside native species?

A. (Paul) No we do not put limits on the numbers of grass carp or any particular species, but we can provide advice. The site owner has the ultimate decision so long as obviously they have a permit to stock the species in the first place.

A. (Neil) If you are using the fish for weed control there are certain stocking densities recommended to do this most efficiently but as mentioned we can only advise. A lot of fisheries that stock them for weed control find often that the fish do not eat the intended weed.

Q. Following on from the initial grass carp question, just to be clear this was in relation to our association finding grass carp in one of our waters, introduced we think from a garden pond as opposed to a planned stocking!?

A. (Paul) If they were purchased for a private garden pond then they would have been covered by general stocking license so no need to apply to Defra to do this however if they have been introduced to your fishery illegally this is a problem although as non-native fish species go they are fairly low risk. We would need to know in any case of an unpermitted introduction and in most cases we would be able to add them to your stocking permit if the risk of their presence is assessed as low. Other ornamental fish species like Sturgeon are another matter entirely and under no circumstances should be introduced to fisheries, we will not permit for them at all as they pose much greater risks for biosecurity and aquatic ecology.

Q. Why are permits to use nets limited to 1 or 2 years. There can sometimes be delays in issuing permits which can cause problems where professional netting contractors have been planned and booked?

A. (Neil) The Agency's customer charter for turning round an application for fish removal or site permit for introducing fish is a target of 10 working days but this can take longer at busy times and if other complications exist like SSSI status where Natural England are needed to be consulted. The removal permits are limited to around 12 months to enable the local officers to keep frequently re-assessing criteria and circumstances to see if anything has changed with regard to the need for fish removal.

Q. What about moving fish between owned fisheries? What are the required steps to take etc?

A. (Paul) If waters are on the same complex they can be treated as a single site under one stocking permit where fish can be moved from one water to another without restriction. However, if there is some complicating risk criteria like one of the waters is close to a river or further away from the others on the complex not connected hydrologically then another permit may be required. If waters are owned by say one angling club at different locations, they will be under separate permits so an application will be required to move fish between those.

Q. What are the thoughts on commercial fisheries that promote massive fish weights during contests, is there any obligation on the EA to monitor these waters?

A. (Paul) It is a matter of fish welfare which the fisheries management are responsible to maintain. The Agency did previously have rules around the biomasses which fisheries would be allowed to stock but with changes in the way fisheries are managed and new technology increasing carrying capacities of fisheries it is possible to support higher stocking densities without issues so the old criteria became outdated.

A. (Neil) The Agency do apply biomass stocking restrictions on some sites like on river environments and SSSI but fully enclosed sites like commercial fisheries this is down to the fishery management as said.

A. (Paul) The Agency will respond to incidents of fish distress, diseases and mortalities however as this is a service provided through fishing rod license income.

Q. There is always a lively debate regarding Zander, is there any plans to change the classification on this species. Currently the law states they cannot be returned however TV programs often show these species being returned with no mention of the law?

A. (Paul) No there is no plans to change the place of Zander on the wildlife & countryside act list of species which cannot be released into the wild. This is not something the Agency has any control upon. In many ways this question is for Natural England. As mentioned in my presentation there are stillwater fisheries where Zander are permitted to be due to safe enclosed stillwater criteria being met to allow a permit for their stocking but in natural waterways and non-enclosed venues this is not allowed.

Q. Does the EA have any plans to replace the fisheries officers in the North West after the retirements of Ian Heyes and Andy Eaves? Andy Eaves used to run fisheries workshops for local angling clubs which were fantastic and very informative. Are there any plans to start running these very beneficial workshops again?

A. (Alex) I can say yes, the Agency are looking to replace as I have spoken to both those fisheries officers recently because we are running the Northwest virtual fisheries forum with them soon. Regarding the workshop sessions drop me an email and I will have a chat with the NW teams at the Angling Trust and see what can be arranged as I am sure we could take something like this on.

Q. What is the best way to get in touch with your local fisheries officer?

A. (Paul) We have FO's spread all over the country which to the Agency is divided up into 14 areas. Each area team has several FO's and will have someone covering your patch of their region. To get in touch with them the general enquiry number is 03708506506. Let the operator know where you are based and ask them to be put in touch with your local fisheries team. You will receive a call back at the next opportunity by your local officer.

Q. Is an F1 Carp native or non and are there any special regulations on stocking?

A. (Paul) They are supposedly sterile but from my experience they are mostly not. F1's are a mixture of technically now native Common carp and non-native brown goldfish, so they are non-native in conclusion. However, as far as regulation of stocking is concerned they are considered to be native and in enclosed waters you do not need a special permit to keep F1 carp. Species like Prussian carp are non-native and have stocking classification as such. This is important to mention because Prussian carp are near identical to F1's to the point where even the Agencies experts have to resort to molecular testing for correct Identification and there is increasingly more reports of fisheries having Prussian carp and claiming them as F1's.

A. (Neil) F1's should only be stocked to fully enclosed waters where there is low risk of escape into natural waterways.

Q. Who should talk to regarding the populations of stickleback in my fishery and how best to conserve/boost them?

A. (Paul) I would point you to get in touch with your local fisheries officer.

Q. If a fishery has a stock pond and has excess roach/rudd do you need/can you put those fish into the river system to help the river system without a permit or would this need to be discussed with the local fisheries officer?

A. (Paul) No we do not generally allow fish from stillwaters to be transferred into rivers. Fish stocked into rivers should come from an authorised fish farm with the appropriate health checks. The Agency has Calverton fish farm as it's official national coarse fish rearing unit and this farm has facilities to replicate flowing water in its stock ponds so juvenile fish are acclimatised to a river environment before they are introduced to rivers.

A. (Neil) You could make use of those fish by moving them on to some of your own fisheries within the same site or to another of your fisheries off site with the appropriate stocking permit.

Q. Prolific species such as roach breed in vast numbers are stunted in many lakes, some fishery advisors recommend the removal of small roach for the

purposes of limiting oxygen depletion in fisheries. if these are to be removed what can be done with the removed fish?

A. (Paul) Talk to your local fisheries officer in the first instance. If this is a large volume of fish then it could be worth contracting a local fish supplier to do this for you.

A. (Neil) Some angling clubs will be resourced to undertake netting and move fish around and excess fish can usually be re-homed at other fisheries and waters under correct permitting within a reasonable distance of your site. It is not uncommon for angling clubs to do trades in this respect.

Q. how much is too many fish (stocking density) on a lake without carp stock?

A. (Alex Clegg) Circumstance dependant so getting in touch with your local fisheries officer is the best action for advice.

Q. Can you suggest methods for removing crayfish apart from netting?

A. (Paul) Depends what is practical at the water. Most of the control methods for crayfish are not going to remove them completely. They are notorious for coming back more strongly than before after removal attempts.

A. (Neil) The Agency's fish movements team offer section 27A authorisations to remove crayfish, but these are not always suitable to achieve what the fishery owner wants. Crayfish trapping is not the solution to eradicating them but more to reduce angler issues with false bites. Trapping is very labour intensive so consider whether this is something you want to do.

A. (Alex) There are some biological controls out there like stocking Chub and Perch into fisheries as they predate on the small crayfish. What is the consensus on predator introduction?

A. (Neil) It's a solution in the toolbox but you want to use as many tools as possible or is practical to use. I wouldn't have high expectations that these biological controls will be the solution to Crayfish establishment.

Q. We applied to stock barbel in our match lake and was told we couldn't, as they a non-native species to the south west plus we have a screen on our

outlet which leads to the river camel, would this also mean we can't stock wells or grass carp?

A. (Paul) Yes it does. For Wells catfish the presence of a screen doesn't mean you are able to stock them anywhere but with the Barbel if your fishery is within the Camel floodplain they will not be permitted due to chance of flooding. Escape of Barbel into the Camel would have implications to Salmon and Sea Trout which are indigenous.

Q. We had a health check on our fishery in 2018 and have Ergasilus briani. Prior to this there was no issues. One of our waters has a large contingent of small silverfish which we want to reduce, is there anything that can be done other than killing these fish?

A. (Neil) Fish removals will be possible, but any fish removed from the site will only be able to be introduced to another fully enclosed stillwater or another water body which has the same category 2 pathogen. This is a matter to discuss with your local Environment Agency Fisheries Officer.

A. (Paul) It is worth saying that you could dis-infect the fishery by draining it down, liming the lakebed, and then re-stocking. Subject to testing afterwards it could be deemed to be parasite free and then you would be eligible to move those fish to other waters applying to do so the conventional way.

Q. Which method is best to remove signal crayfish from a water, which bait is most effective? Also do you need an EA permit for this?

A. (Neil) Many things will work effectively as bait for crayfish. Something smelly and meaty. Dog food and cat food for example. For the crayfish trapping permit these are allocated depending on your postcode as some regions of England trapping is not permitted such as north of the midlands and in the southwest. The reason for regulating crayfish trapping is partly for protecting white clawed crayfish as trapping is indiscriminate and a natural England license is required to trap white clawed crayfish. Another reason as touched on earlier is trapping doesn't fix the problem of crayfish and can make it worse by removing the adults which would predate on the juveniles reducing their survival rates.

Q. Surely an FR2 permit is required to move fish, from lake to lake by netting, even within a single site containing multiple lakes. Have been waiting for our permit for 12 months?

A. (Paul) Yes that is correct. When I spoke earlier, I was only thinking about the site permit side of it. An FR2 permit will be required to transfer netted fish between lakes. Otherwise known as a section 27a authorisation. These are not only required for netting but also fish removal through electrofishing.

A. (Neil) The fish movements team at the Agency are the conduit for all applications nationally which when we receive applications, they are passed on to the correct area team. We have a team email box which is fmapplications@environment-agency.gov.uk . You can email the team and they will report back what stage your application is at currently.

Q. Alex, you've just mentioned a previous presentation re stillwater preparation for summer. Is a link to that available please?

A. [Preparing your stillwater fishery for summer virtual fisheries forum available here!](#)

Q. Can you tell me about the recommendation for the number of carp we can keep in a 1-acre lake, we currently have 75 between 10 & 23lbs?

A. (Paul) This is very circumstance dependant and will be a question to contact your local environment agency fisheries officer regarding as they will compile information about the water, likely visit and inform you what they think is best.

Q. Have F1's already spread into river systems with the flooding we receive these days?

A. (Alex) Certainly I have caught an F1 from a river which was reported to the EA hotline and through [i-Record](#).

A. (Paul) This is an increasing issue and risk not just limited to F1's but all stillwater fisheries non-native species. As a consequence of climate change, we are experiencing more flooding and in the near future floodplain limits will have to be redrawn to address this.

Q. How do you stop invasive species being put into public owned park waters?

A. (Paul) Important question. Like many things, prevention is better than cure and once fish are into a water it is very difficult to get them out. We do this partly through publicity and education targeted at anglers, fishery owners and the general public. The body for regulating ornamental fish ownership are also very active at informing fish keepers of the risks to releasing such fish into the wild.

Q. Good evening. Signal crayfish have been mentioned earlier. Have Paul or Neil had any dealings with Chinese Mitten crabs. They are abundant in the Tidal Trent and have been for a few years. Are they a concern to the EA?

A. (Paul) Yes, they are a concern and have arrived through ballast water on cruise ships. They do not just cause problems ecologically but also burrow underneath foodbanks encouraging erosion and undermining out flood defence structures.

Q. How adaptable are small bream as stock fish into a natural venue?

A. (Neil) One thing to think about when stocking fish is following a bit of best practice to ensure that the fish will be introduced in a low stress manner as this will help their adapting speed to their new home. Also using reputable fish farms/dealers etc. The best times to stock are during the Autumn and Winter as oxygen levels are higher, the fish are less active during these colder periods and parasites are less prevalent. All these things will help.

Q. I did notice that Barbel wasn't on the lists. I know they love the flow of a river, but what is the Trusts view on stocking in still waters?

A. (Alex) The Angling Trust does not have a position on stocking Barbel into stillwaters. I personally would rather catch them from a River but stocking them into stillwaters is something which is able to be permitted for by the Agency so it will continue.

A. (Paul) Correct, Barbel and Chub stocking into stillwaters is permitted despite being an emotive subject. We had a colleague produce a masters degree thesis on the suitability of Barbel in stillwater environments and the conclusions of that was that it very much depended on the nature of the stillwater habitat and the other species present/stocking density as to how well they coped. Barbel didn't co-habit well with Carp particularly. The Agency will permit them to be stocked so long as we

feel the habitat and fishery circumstances will enable them to survive well and thrive.

Q. Do we need a permit to drain a lake so that we can net the lake ourselves?

A. (Neil) Depends on the activity you are potentially going to be doing. If you are going to be removing fish through other methods than rod & line then a section 27a authorisation is required. The other question regarding the lake draining you mention you may need a water discharge license to discharge that water elsewhere. This is a matter to contact your local fisheries officer regarding.

Key contacts from this forum meeting:

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